

Executive **EDGE**

HOW GOOD ARE THE GURUS?

Business gurus like Tom Peters and Michael Hammer get fabulously rich telling executives how to run their corporations. But who are these people? Where do they come from? And why should we listen to them?

In one sense, gurus have been around almost as long as there has been an America. "We're the only society in the world that believes it can keep on getting better and better," says Peters. "So we keep on getting suckered in by people like Ben Franklin and Emerson and [Peter] Drucker and me."

Modern gurudom began in the 1940s, when Drucker persuaded universities that they should offer courses in business management. Later, corporations paid management teachers to give talks at business conferences and meetings. Then, in the early 1980s, frightened executives besieged the gurus seeking advice on



how to fight off Japanese competitors. Peters's *In Search of Excellence*, published in 1982, sold a million copies in less than a year and got the fad on its current roll.

Today the typical guru is, like Peters,

a former academic who published a business best-seller and is now in great demand as a speaker. Twyman Towery, a management consultant who is also an authority on wolves, became a popular business seminar leader after he combined his two fields in *The Wisdom of Wolves: Nature's Way to Organizational Success*. Towery gives four speeches a month at \$4,500 per speech.

Do the gurus really know what they are talking about? The media tycoon Rupert Murdoch maintains that most of the gurus' advice is worthless. Nevertheless, corporations continue to shell out millions to have the gurus advise them.

According to one study, there are now more than 31,000 management experts in the world, and some of them command daily fees of \$10,000—and up.

From Alan Farnham, "In Search of Suckers," *Fortune*, October 14, 1996, pp. 119-126.

DOING DIVERSITY THE ARMY WAY

Forget the multicultural approach to racial diversity, the authors of a new book advise corporations. In fact, say John Sibley Butler and Charles C. Moskos, businesses would do better to adopt a well-known monocultural approach—that of the U.S. Army.

Butler and Moskos's book, *All That You Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way*, especially praises the Army for its success in selecting and grooming black leaders. The authors note that, in 1973, only 17 percent of the Army's enlisted personnel and 3 percent of its commissioned officers were African American. Today 30 percent of enlisted personnel are black, as are 11.5 percent of officers—including 9 percent of generals.

According to Butler and Moskos, the Army's approach to diversity differs from that of corporations in two main ways:

- Far from encouraging the flowering of many cultures, as corporations try to do, the Army tolerates only one—which it describes as "Afro-Anglo"—thus precluding the growth of a cul-

tural opposition. Butler urges corporations to imitate the Army in emphasizing objectives rather than culture.

- Like corporations, the Army sets numerical goals for the development of African-American leaders. But the Army has much more flexibility in setting such goals and spends more money on the training of such leaders. For example, although blacks constitute 30 percent of the Army's enlisted personnel, they make up a larger percentage of its sergeants.

On the other hand, Barbara Deane, editor of the *Cultural Diversity at Work* newsletter, points out that the Army's "command and control" structure allows it to impose its values and strategies in a way corporations cannot. Deane says also that the Army must make racial integration work because it has so many African-American soldiers. Most corporations have a relatively small percentage of black employees and thus need not put so much emphasis on successful integration, she says.

From Leon E. Wynter, "Authors Laud Military for Multiracial Effort," *Wall Street Journal*, November 6, 1996, p. B1.